

Biomedical Laboratory Research & Development (BLRD)

Guidance for Submission of a Letter of Intent for a Interagency Preclinical TBI Resource Center Merit Review Award

I. Introduction

The application process for a Interagency Preclinical TBI Resource Center (IRC) Merit Review application begins with the preparation and submission of a Letter of Intent (LOI). **The primary purpose of the LOI is to provide BLRD with the opportunity to determine if the proposed activities meet the objective of the RFA, to establish a VA-funded interagency center that will work with TBI researchers funded by relevant US federal government agencies to support and accelerate the development of new candidate therapies for TBI.**

In addition, submission of the LOI allows BLRD the opportunity to access and provide feedback on the clinical and/or scientific focus and design of the merit reviews, the proposed innovations, and the overall impact on the veteran population.

II. BLRD IRC Merit Definition

The purpose of the RFA is to establish a standing Interagency Preclinical TBI Resource Center (IRC) that will serve investigators funded by all Federal agencies (NIH, DoD, NSF...) by providing resources and supporting an enterprise approach to preclinical TBI research. The intent is for the IRC is to provide centralized resources to enhance investigators' knowledge, to support standardization across laboratories to support collaborative research, to support collaborations among investigators that will accelerate the pace of research and to provide resources that will support the use of model systems to develop treatments that will improve TBI outcomes. The full requirements are detailed in the RFA.

III. LOI Approval Considerations

The BLRD Data Science Merit Review LOI must:

- a. Fall within the BLRD purview.
- b. Demonstrate the proposed Director, Administrative Officer, Associate Directors, and Steering Committee members have the qualifications to meet the objectives of the RFA.
- c. Summarize how the organizational mission, structure, and strategy will meet the objectives of the RFA.
- d. Provided a preliminary budget and biographical sketches for all key personell.

IV. Components of the LOI Submission

Only one LOI is required for the project. The LOI must contain the following three required components (A-D):

A. VHA Research & Development Letter of Intent Cover Page (VA Form 10-1313-13)

This form is available on the [forms page of the VA Research website](#).

B. Completed LOI Template

The template is available on the BLRD [webpage](#). Please clearly and succinctly address all of the requirements.

C. Biographical Sketches for All Key Personnel

The biographical sketch template is available on the [VA Research Intranet](#). If you cannot access the intranet, please contact your local research office.

D. Preliminary Budget

V. Submission of the LOI

BLRD will review and respond to submitted LOIs at any time; however, an LOI must be submitted no later than the date specified in the RFA. LOIs must be e-mailed to VHABLRD-CSRD@va.gov by the local VA facility research office. Applicants may not upload LOIs directly to the mailbox. Questions relating to the LOI preparation and submission process may also be directed to VHABLRD-CSRD@va.gov. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit LOIs as early as possible.**

LOIs with the following issues will be administratively withdrawn:

- a. Multiple submissions on behalf of the same PI;
- b. LOIs lacking the requisite information;
- c. LOIs submitted by investigators that are not eligible to receive VA funding.

LOIs meeting all of the administrative requirements are subject to disapproval if:

- a. Do not fall within the purview of BLRD and/or the scope of the RFA;
- b. Lacks innovation/impact or that do not address topics of interest for BLRD;
- c. Are overly represented by ongoing ORD-funded studies.
- d. PI has current BLRD funding or is eligible to apply to other BLRD RFAs.

VI. Approval

The LOI approval letter must be submitted with the full application package (in the Letters of Support attachment, 08b_VA_Letters.pdf). **A submitted TBI IRC Merit Review application must not deviate significantly in scope or strategy from the original approved LOI. BLRD may administratively withdraw from review any application that substantially deviates from what was described and approved at the LOI stage.**

An approved Data Science Merit Review LOI is valid for a maximum of three (3) submissions of an application (initial submission and up to two resubmissions) during a period that encompasses four (4) **consecutive** review cycles following the initial approval of the LOI.

Effective: December 2020